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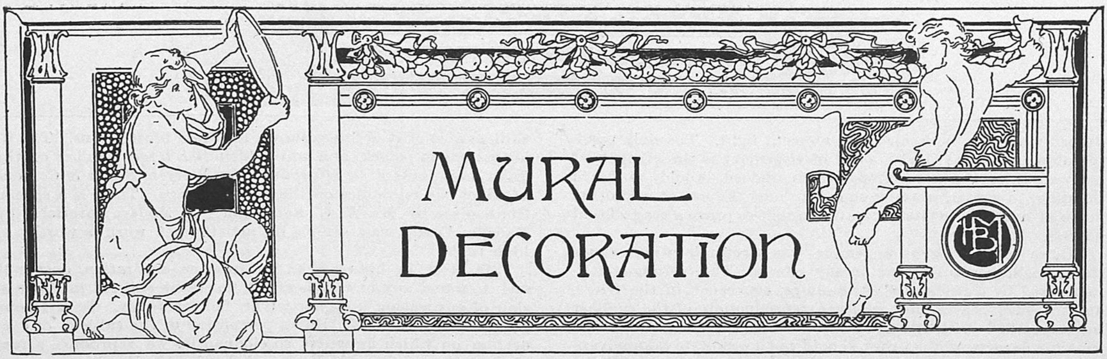


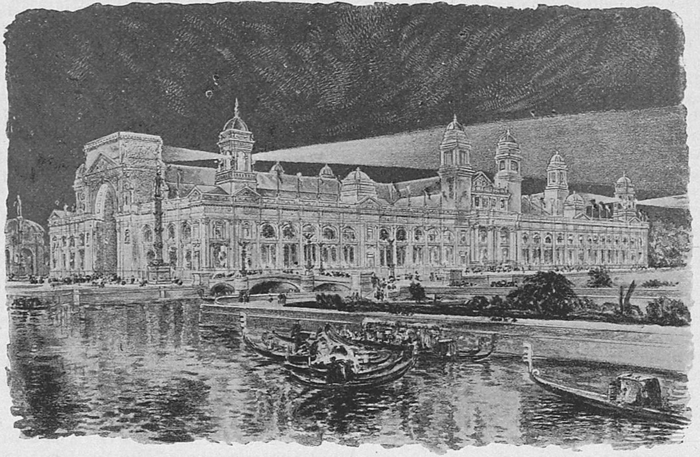
MURAL DECORATION

THE DECORATIVE USES OF ELECTRICITY AT THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION.

By the Editor.

AMONG the magnificence of design and prodigality of execution that characterized the buildings constituting the World's Fair, the Electricity Building challenged admiration by reason of its enormous size and lavish wealth of architectural beauty. But its exhibits were more marvelous still; they were the greatest wonders of the Exhibition, for electric progress during the last few years has established a hundred new enterprises in the industrial world. At night this building was the most frequented, for it was then that its specific exhibits could be witnessed with the greatest advantage.

By far the most striking exhibit was that made by the General Electric Company, on the main floor. The central piece of display was the great Edison Tower of Light, the tall shaft extending almost to the roof of the colonnade, the whole studded with miniature incandescent lights, arranged in geometrical figures of red, orange and purple. These were wired on various circuits, each connected with a separate key on the keyboard, so that a variety of combinations, both of shapes and colors, could be brought into action by the simple pressure of the proper keys. The tower was surmounted by a huge model of the Edison lamp, constructed of forty thousand prisms of glass, carefully wired to an iron framework within. The bulb was ten feet high. The total number of lamps was eight thousand, being equivalent to the light of fifty thousand sperm candles.



Electrical Building, World's Columbian Exposition.

From a scientific point of view the tower had no particular interest, but as a spectacular or decorative achievement it was the greatest success of the entire building. It was a veritable pillar of fire, with design and color transformations executed to the march of waltz music, adding greatly to the interest of the display. At times the entire construction would burst into a pillar of flame, a trophy of jewelled lights, surmounted by an electric sun, showering on all sides infinite radiance. The column exhibited in the most dramatic way the wonderful transformations of light available by the use of the electric current, and of its perfect obedience to the machinery that manipulated it.

It is interesting to follow the transformations of energy which have rendered possible the applicability of the electric current to universal use.

Where does the light come from and how is it generated?

To obtain a correct idea of the subject we must first of all visit the Machinery Building, of equally imposing dimensions as the Electricity Building, situate on the other side of the Court of Honor. In the annex to the Machinery Hall was a building occupied by fifty-two steam boilers, that supplied the motive force to drive the entire machinery connected with the Exposition, including the great dynamo machines, by which such power was converted into electrical energy. To one unaccustomed to such a vast exhibit of machinery, at the Exposition the sight certainly proved an event of a lifetime. In every boiler there was a roaring volcano of fire, produced by the combustion of crude petroleum, supplied in pipes from the wells 500 miles away in Ohio, the atomized oil being blown into the furnaces by steam. The compressed roar of the congregated furnaces resembled that of a tornado in its immensity, and the result of such earth-shaking terror was observable in the whirling of myriad wheels in the adjoining colossal building. Here herculean steam engines were driving gigantic electric dynamos, by which their energy was converted into electricity, and thence transferred by wires to the Electricity Building, and there converted into the various agencies that minister to man's comfort and power and splendor.

For example, the electrical energy in the wires was retransferred into mechanical energy by means of the electric motor, and again, through the agency of the pump, was changed into water power. There was exhibited a large mine pump, capable of raising five hundred gallons per minute to a height of 650 feet. The pump delivers water under 650 feet of pressure to a water wheel, which brings it back to the mechanical form, and through its shaft, drives the armature of another electric generator. It is this interchangeability of electrical and mechanical energy that renders this element so valuable in the present and assures for it permanent use in the energies of the future.

The decorative use of electricity is a subject in its veriest infancy and was very beautifully shown in a bijou reproduction of an Egyptian temple. The pillars supporting the roof were constructed of green opalescent glass, in longitudinal ribs, illuminated from within, the capitals being orthodox reproductions of the lotus, and constructed of orange glass, also lighted from within. A beautiful panel decoration consisted of a construction in stained glass, representing the sacred vulture of Egypt, with wings of red and green light, supporting a blood red sun. The ceiling contained a large panel of stained glass of Egyptian ornament in dull reds, greens and yellows, lighted like the other decorations with concealed incandescent light. The only possible objection to so lavish a use of electricity is the great heat evolved from the decorations which, indeed, would render a building, in winter, warm enough, without the use of any other mode of heating; but its decorative qualities prove a magnificent success.

Close to the Egyptian temple was a rotunda whose dome shaped ceiling was frescoed in sky effects. This ceiling was illuminated by a circle of electric lamps, concealed in the frieze, and the effect was a most realistic reproduction of the summer heavens, filled with the gladness of noontide light. Here is a hint for decorators that they should not be slow to take advantage of. The effect was startlingly real, and yet possessed the indescribable softness of a light that was neither that of the sun, nor of the moon, but seemed to be the radiance of a heavenly orb but half the size of our own sun. In a word, it was the flush of the summer dawn—of that soft, sweet light that is all gladness, without heat.

The office of the General Electric Company had its ceiling studded with moonlights, and a red fire burned in the hearth, both being the product of the electric current. The ceiling of another room was decorated with scrolls and panels outlined with polychromatic lights, and beneath a cove of beaded fire was a frieze of garlands of lights suspended from rosettes, all formed of minute incandescent lights. By means of these lamps of variegated colors, the most ornate effects are possible. The lamps may be sunk into the delicate architectural tracery of the ballroom wall, hidden in the foliage of its shrubs and plants, strewn among the ornaments of the drawing-room, or made to act the part of the wax candle and gas jet without their disadvantages. Arranged in letters they may be made up into mottoes, be worked into heraldic devices, or combined into magic patterns of bewildering splendor. Luminous columns, garlands of brilliancy, festoons and cascades of prismatic light, glorious vistas of lucent beauty, all are now possible with the miniature electric lamp.

This decorative sorcery, wrought from one of earth's grandest forces, gives the decorator a new motive for the glorification of his art. The same force that now drives our chariot wheels, and that is being applied every day to whatever uses any other form of energy can be applied, has already created a new and glorious realm of art, whose yet unthought of decorative uses will make our interiors bloom with fabled enchantment.

The grandest decorative use of the electric current was seen at night, when the palaces that surrounded the Court of Honor were transfigured by the magic of its celestial fire. The world has seen nothing more resplendent than those imposing buildings wreathed and glorified with miles of festal fires and the electric fountains illuminated by light from the great searchlight—the glory of the Exhibition—a lasting souvenir to all who visited it as a sight never before beheld by man at any previous exhibition in any other country in the world.

Viewed in regard to its future possibilities the electrical display was the grandest focus of the Fair, the most significant of all the exhibits. At every turn one saw astonishing marvels, and the visitors became animated with a kindred impulse to know the final glory of this occult force. All were responsive to

"The hope, the dream, the wild desire—
Delirious, yet divine—to know!"

INDOORS.

A NEW WORK ON INTERIOR DECORATION.

A MAGNIFICENTLY illustrated book has just been issued by Messrs. Warren, Fuller & Co., the wall paper manufacturers, of New York city. The text, and many of the illustrations, have been supplied by the artist, Mr. Samuel How, who is connected with the firm. The four colored illustrations, designed by Mr. How, are a "Sketch for Louis XVI. Parlor," "A Modern Dining-Room," "A Morning Room" and "A Hall," all of which are at once highly artistic in design and *fin de siecle* in feeling.

These interiors, while exhibiting the elegance of modern interior decoration, have their walls decorated with the sumptuous wall-papers manufactured by the publishers, and Mr. How's skill as a colorist is finely shown in these illustrations. The illustrations in black and white include a large number of the finest wall-paper designs produced by Warren, Fuller & Co., one of which we reproduce on the opposite page. There is a special frontispiece by Mr. W. G. Reed, and "A Modern Interior," by Malcolm Frazer, as a sample of artistic pen work is worthy of high rank.

Mr. How, in his remarks on interior decoration, does not seek to found any new style of art, nor is he enlisted in the mission of advocating any particular fad or fancy. To give our readers an idea of Mr. How's perception of the subject of decoration on which he writes so eloquently, we reproduce a few of the more striking passages of the book. He thus refers to American artists:

> "Our artists, using the name in its broadest sense, are unclassifiable—brilliant, occasionally unique. There seems to be no limit to the materials our architects and designers use in preparing their schemes. We welcome among us the intellectual quality, which is actively engaged in admiring the beautiful for its own sake, and which will help society to keep its pleasures as large, and its pains as small as possible."

Mr. How is an advocate of European art, for he says:

> "Designers and manufacturers alike go to Europe for their models. In this they are right in spite of the meaningless cry for novelty. Cannot we have a new style? Yes, by all means; but that something new must be founded upon what we already have. It must be grafted on, so to speak, and take its proper place on the tree of knowledge, lest it be artificial and unreal."

From this the reader might infer that the writer has a very poor opinion of American art. Later on, however, he recovers himself, and says:

> "Until quite lately our brightest designs have been produced in Europe. The designs have been purchased generally in France, and success was a foregone conclusion. Our workmen here simply were asked to copy. If that were well done, then success was assured. The situation is now altogether changed. Our manufacturers are not quite satisfied to pose as copyists; their ambitions are much higher. From importing designs, they have gone to importing the design and the workmen, which has greatly changed everything. With different eyes surrounded by new influences, our manufacturers now turn out materials which compare so favorably with imported goods, that they have already made quite a mark in competition with foreign (products)."
>
> "Those whose constant endeavors to bring the classic feeling within the reach of us all, have led to many artistic results. John La Farge, Louis C. Tiffany, Otto Heinicke, Owen Brown and others have worked in this direction, and it is to their strong work that we look for results in the near future."

He is a strenuous advocate of wall-paper, and on this topic refers to the prominence among wall decorations of wall-paper. We have yet to find an effect or a design which cannot readily be reproduced in paper. Of course, it is admitted that this work is mechanical in a measure, and whereas the old legitimate artists worked with their hands, we very largely depend on our machines. Were it not so, the greater part of our citizens would certainly go without wall-papers, not having the means to purchase them, which brings us to one prominent point in the argument—namely, how much can be accomplished with the expenditure of a great deal of taste and a small amount of money. Attractive papers and good decorations cost no more than poor ones.

How is the public to determine between those with taste and those without? is one of Mr. How's pertinent queries, and this is his answer:

> "Some love their horses as well as their home. There are some people who will expend a great deal of care in the selection of a surgeon to work upon a favorite animal, but will place their homes in the hands of a poorly informed professional man or others—men who undoubtedly are doing their best to serve you, but still lack the experience to advise upon critical points. Allow some one who has had practical experience, added to a natural taste, to fulfill your commissions."

Scattered throughout the book are many practical hints on the subject of wall decoration. For example, he says:

> "Striped paper increases the apparent height of a room; use it on your low rooms."
>
> "A plain wall with a good top frieze, forming a strong note of color, makes a strong room, and gives opportunities for hanging etchings, plaster casts, sketches, etc."
>
> "Where we have a great deal of furniture, the best way, and one which unites the rooms, is to repeat the same decorations in each room. Let your wall-paper run through, and also your carpets. This, as a connecting link, will be more pleasing."

Mr. How is a believer in ceiling decorations, and inquires of his readers if they ever stop to admire the work of such painters as Alfred Stevens, George Maynard, Schladermundt